

**DISABILITIES ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
FINAL MINUTES
January 11, 2006**

Members Present	Jessie Chapman, Van Johnson, Julie Palmer, Ed Senft, Elaine Senft, Dave Wilber
Members Absent	Eric Clark, Mike Savory, Ed Ziegler
Guest Present	Cathy Hill (Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services – Office of the Inspector General)
Staff Present	Sherry Confer, Colleen Miller, Lisa Shehi
Welcome/Introductions/ Public Comment	Van Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. and welcomed everyone asking that all guests, staff, and Council members introduce themselves.
Public Comments	There was no public comment offered.
Council Training <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “How a Bill Becomes a Law-Points of Advocacy Opportunities”	Sherry Confer provided training on how a bill becomes a law in Virginia and identified where points of advocacy exist in the process.
Approval of October 2005 Meeting Minutes	<p>Ed Senft asked about a MOTION made that a member be removed from the Council due to non-attendance yet remains listed on the Council Roster. Ms. Confer explained that the Council’s recommendation will be made to the Board at the January meeting. The Board will accept or deny the recommendation and they will notify the member if they are to be removed.</p> <p>There being no changes to the minutes, a MOTION was made by Van Johnson and seconded by Elaine Senft to approve the minutes as presented. The MOTION was passed by unanimous vote.</p>

**Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy
Mission Statement**

Through zealous and effective advocacy and legal representation, to: protect and advance legal, human, and civil rights of persons with disabilities; combat and prevent abuse, neglect, and discrimination; and promote independence, choice, and self-determination by persons with disabilities.

Board of Directors Update

Colleen Miller, Executive Director, noted that the Board met on September 20, 2005 and approved the Goals, Focus Areas, and Objectives. Ms. Miller reminded the Council that the Goals and Focus Areas are approved for a two-year period and the Objectives may be updated each year. Councils will be involved in the process of amending or revising the Objectives. Other actions taken at the September Board meeting include:

- Adoption of four of the agency's internal policies. Operating policies will continue to be reviewed by the Internal Policy Committee and presented to the Board for endorsement. Ms. Miller explained that the Committee reviews the operating policies of the agency and that they also develop policies for the operation of the board which also has an effect on the council as well. Ms. Miller shared that an area the Internal Policy Committee would be studying is compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and the ability for members of committees, boards, and/or councils to meet telephonically and added that when a telephonic meeting occurs, the location at which the representative takes the call must be open to the public. Ms. Miller explained that the Internal Policy Committee will also recommend under what circumstances council members receive expense reimbursement for attending board meetings.
- Ms. Miller clarified the purpose of the Ombudsman program and explained that the funding for this program had not been included in the current budget proposal. Ms. Miller noted that supporters of this program will ask for sponsorship of a budget amendment by a member of the Senate.
- Additionally, Ms. Miller shared the Board's desire to have more participation on committees by members of the advisory councils. Ed and Elaine Senft offered to sit on the Finance and Resource Development Committee.

Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy Mission Statement

Through zealous and effective advocacy and legal representation, to: protect and advance legal, human, and civil rights of persons with disabilities; combat and prevent abuse, neglect, and discrimination; and promote independence, choice, and self-determination by persons with disabilities.

Executive Director's Update

- **1st Quarter Progress
for FY 2006 Goals and
Focus Areas**

Ms. Miller explained that the Progress on Priorities report included in package had been distributed to the Council as draft due to timing of package production. The differences noted from the draft and final versions encompassed outreach activities. Ms. Miller shared that VOPA has performed extensive outreach in southwest Virginia and on the Eastern Shore. Presentations have been made at Radford and at the Wytheville Community Service Board with both entities interested in further outreach collaboration. Three southwest Virginia communities were identified for more focused outreach – Galax, Grundy, Bluefield. A significant amount of work has been done with the Center for Independent Living (CIL), the CSB, and the local newspaper on Eastern Shore as well as with the children's hospital located in Tidewater which serves Eastern Shore citizens. Each entity expressed interest in assuring that their constituents are made aware of VOPA's services.

Ms. Miller commented that VOPA has begun work on abuse and neglect investigations outside of state facilities, including nursing homes. Additionally, Ms. Miller shared that VOPA has been awarded a one-year grant for federal fair housing outreach. Activities in this effort are still being developed but will include a web-based Learning Center, trainings to staff at all state facilities; trainings to Community Service Boards on the topic of how fair housing applies to their clients; and a pilot with the Spanish-speaking community. Ms. Miller noted that VOPA received multiple letters of support and offers for assistance in regards to the grant.

Further, Ms. Miller shared that VOPA will launch an employment clinic on January 26 to provide basic information about employment as it relates to Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In updates regarding the General Assembly, Ms. Miller noted that we will feature a list of bills that are being

Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy Mission Statement

Through zealous and effective advocacy and legal representation, to: protect and advance legal, human, and civil rights of persons with disabilities; combat and prevent abuse, neglect, and discrimination; and promote independence, choice, and self-determination by persons with disabilities.

monitored on our website. Further, the Coalition for Virginians with Mental Disabilities will hold a rally on Monday, January 16, 2006.

- **Litigation Report**

Ms. Miller shared details of the VOPA Poll Monitoring project. Ms. Miller explained that VOPA had notified local registrars prior to election day that staff would be monitoring various locations statewide to evaluate accessibility. Less than one week prior to the election, the City of Richmond advised VOPA that access to polling sites within the City would be denied. VOPA filed suit (VOPA v. Showalter). The court denied VOPA's Motion for access based on not having enough time to consider the facts. Overall, staff monitored over 50 polling sites statewide and noted that in many cases accessibility issues existed only on election day while in other locations, accessibility issues were present every day.

Council members asked Ms. Miller to explain various cases noted in the Litigation Report, including recent news coverage of an investigative report regarding Central Virginia Training Center. Ms. Miller explained that a newspaper reporter had received a copy of a report which VOPA deems as confidential material. She affirmed that the report was not disclosed by VOPA staff and that VOPA still holds this as a confidential matter and cannot comment on this investigation.

- **Financial Report**

Ms. Miller explained that the Financial Reports were not available at the time of the meeting. Mr. and Mrs. Senft will be added to the distribution of these reports as new members of the Finance Committee.

Working Lunch

The Council observed a working lunch from 12:00 until 12:30.

**Objective # 7.7.1: Outreach:
Foster Care - Children with
Special Education Needs**

Ms. Confer stated that Council members had raised the need for assistance for children with special needs in the foster care system as an objective for 2006. Ms. Confer

**Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy
Mission Statement**

Through zealous and effective advocacy and legal representation, to: protect and advance legal, human, and civil rights of persons with disabilities; combat and prevent abuse, neglect, and discrimination; and promote independence, choice, and self-determination by persons with disabilities.

asked the Council for input and assistance in identifying resources where VOPA could do outreach for foster care. The Council brainstormed potential resources including the Department of Social Services foster care program, the court system, therapeutic foster care providers.

Membership

- **Recruitment**

Ms. Confer discussed the membership of the Council and recruitment of members based on the needs of the Council. The Council currently lacks membership from various geographical and cultural areas. Ms. Confer distributed a draft recruitment announcement. Also distributed was a draft expansion plan with various recruitment approaches. Council members brainstormed other recruitment ideas including cross-recruiting. Mr. Wilber requested that Ms. Confer provide Council members with a recruiting package to include a Council application, VOPA brochures, and any other additional information deemed appropriate.

- **Retention**

Ms. Confer brought attendance issues to the attention of the Council and asked if there are any suggestions from the Council as to things that could be done to retain members and encourage attendance? The Council made suggestions including: implementing a “buddy” system in which an experienced Council member would mentor newly recruited members; having the Council Chair contact the new member prior to his or her first meeting to “touch base”; providing a new-member orientation; developing a presentation to be sent the new member and reviewed with the Chair (or “buddy”) prior to the first meeting.

- **Development**

Ms. Confer stated that the next meeting of the Disabilities Advisory Council is tentative based on the desire of Council members to hold a joint meeting with the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) Advisory Council. An object of holding a joint meeting would be to provide leadership training and give Council members the tools and confidence to speak in the public as an advocate. Ms. Confer asked what types of topics the Council members would request be covered. Council

Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy Mission Statement

Through zealous and effective advocacy and legal representation, to: protect and advance legal, human, and civil rights of persons with disabilities; combat and prevent abuse, neglect, and discrimination; and promote independence, choice, and self-determination by persons with disabilities.

members made the following suggestions: including items that would be of general nature such as “what constitutes abuse and neglect?”; definitions of seclusion and restraint; overall case review – why VOPA took the case and filed litigation.

Other Business

- **Travel Voucher
Reminder**

Mr. Wilber reminded Council members to complete travel vouchers for reimbursement of expenses.

- **DAC Annual Report**

Ms. Confer noted that the first Disabilities Advisory Council Annual Report had been forwarded to the Board and was included in the Council package. The Report will be posted on the website by the end of the month.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Van Johnson made a MOTION to dismiss the meeting. Elaine Senft seconded the MOTION and it passed by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m. The next meeting of the Disabilities Advisory Council is tentatively set for April 12, 2006, to be held in Charlottesville.

FINAL MINUTES:

/s/

July 12, 2006

Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy Mission Statement

Through zealous and effective advocacy and legal representation, to: protect and advance legal, human, and civil rights of persons with disabilities; combat and prevent abuse, neglect, and discrimination; and promote independence, choice, and self-determination by persons with disabilities.